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COBBETT'S LETTERS TO LANDLORDS,

*On the Agricultural Report
and Evidence.*

LETTER IV.

Kensington, 1 October, 1821.

LANDLORDS,

103. IN my last letter I concluded my remarks on the *seventh* proposition, or assertion, of the Committee. I now proceed to the eighth, as stated in my first letter, paragraph 15, namely :

VIII. *That distress OF THIS SORT IS NOTHING NEW in our history.* 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

104. Wonderful are the resources of the mind of man in the discovering of comfort ; in the finding out of circumstances to cheer his spirits, and to allay his fears. The old proverb, that

“drowning men catch at straws,” was, perhaps, never more aptly illustrated than in the proposition now before us. When a friend is afflicted with any malady, we seldom fail to find comfort for him in assuring him that his case is *nothing new* ; that others have been afflicted with the same malady ; that they have *got the better of it*, and have lived for many years afterwards in health and happiness !

105. Precisely such is the conduct of the Committee with regard to the proposition immediately under our view. Indeed, as I have frequently had to observe, the main drift of the whole of the Report is to comfort the Landlords ; to persuade them that the malady is temporary. First, consumption and revenue had not fallen off ; then, the distress was not so great

as had been imagined ; then abundant harvests had contributed to the distress ; then, the sudden transition from war to peace had not yet wholly spent itself ; then, other nations suffered in the same way that we did ; and thus, while the paper money and Peel's Bill were kept wholly out of sight, and while the distress was pushed far away from all causes under the control of the Government, there was to remain, in the minds of the Landlords, a *hope that things would come about*. At last, after all these endeavours to afford comfort, comes the assertion, that distress of *this sort is nothing new* in our history. The Landlords were, upon this assertion, to reason thus : Oh ! it is nothing new ; the country has been in the same state before ; and, as we have seen great prosperity of late, so we may again ; and, as the Funds remained untouched upon former occasions of distress, we may now recover our prosperity without the Funds being touched.

106. Such was intended to be

the reasoning of the Landlords, and such their conclusion. Let us see, then, how the matter stands with regard to the basis of all this fine reasoning. Let us see, whether the Committee be correct in the *fact* ; that is to say, let us see whether distress of this sort be *nothing new* in our history.

107. We must here quote the words of the Committee a little more closely than we have sometimes done. They make this branch of comfort a principal head in their Report, and they open it with these words : " Your Committee feel it an *important part of their duty* to recal to the recollection of the House and the country, that, in the years 1804 and 1814, a depression of prices, principally caused by abundant harvests, and a great extension of tillage, excited by the extraordinary high prices of antecedent years, appears to have produced a TEMPORARY pressure and uneasiness among the owners and occupiers of land, and a corres-

" ponding difficulty in the pay-
 " ment of rents and the letting of
 " farms, in **SOME DEGREE**
 " *similar to apprehensions and*
 " *embarrassments* which now pre-
 " vail; and, also, that in many
 " earlier periods, similar com-
 " plaints may be traced in the his-
 " tory of our Agriculture." Af-
 ter this the Committee allude to
 two complaints of this nature made
 between the middle of the seven-
 teenth and the middle of the eigh-
 teenth century, and say that argu-
 ments and alarms were then cur-
 rent, *similar* with those which pre-
 vail in many quarters at this pe-
 riod. " Yet," the Committee adds,
 " those alarms were only tempo-
 " rary, and the fears of those who
 " reasoned upon their continuance
 " and increase were soon dissi-
 " pated by the natural course of
 " seasons and events." But they
 say it is "*impossible* to look back
 " to the years 1804 and 1814, and
 " more especially to the evidence
 " taken before the Committee ap-
 " pointed by the House on the lat-

" ter occasion, *without being for-*
 " *cibly struck with the conformity*
 " *of the statements and opinions*
 " then produced, respecting the
 " ruinous operation and expected
 " continuance of low prices, with
 " those which will be found in the
 " evidence now collected. In-
 deed these statements, in some
 " instances, *come from the mouths*
 " *of the same witnesses.*" The
 Committee hang on, tooth and
 nail, to this *straw*; for, not content
 with the above, they add, that they
 " *trust* that this reference to *past*
 " *experience* will not be altogether
 " useless and unavailing to *allay*
 " *the alarm*, and to dispel some
 " of the *desponding predictions*,
 " which, by a necessarily increas-
 " ing anxiety for the future, tend
 " to aggravate the severe pressure
 " of our present difficulties."

108. Here, then, we have the
motive for this hunting back into
 history. It was to *allay alarm*,
 and to dispel desponding predic-
 tions. This may be, in some
 cases, a very sensible motive; but

the present, I take it, is by no means a case of this kind. The demands of the Fundholder are eating away the estate of the Landlord ; and, therefore, the argument of experience is wholly worthless, unless you can shew, that this cause was at work in those *ancient times*, to which you refer ; and that you cannot shew, unless you go back to the paper money of New England, which was called *Old wack*.

109. We have nothing within our reach here but the complaints of 1804 and 1814 ; and what are we to gather from them ? In those two years the same cause was at work, only in a less powerful degree, that is at work now ! Mark *that*, I pray you ! gentlemen of the Collective Wisdom. And, as I shall presently show, the *distress*, as it is called, was, in those two cases, removed ; that is to say, *high prices were brought back again*, by a pouring forth of the paper money ! These two periods were, in fact, two periods *when the paper money had been*

drawn in. Thus we shall soon “ *dispel*,” not the “ *desponding predictions* ;” but the efforts made by the Committee, to allay the alarm.

110. We will begin with the year 1804. The years 1800, 1801 and part of 1799, a small part of 1802 was a time of great dearth, owing to a bad crop in 1799 and to the wettest harvest ever known in 1800, when it rained every day, in almost every part of England, from the fourteenth of July to nearly about the first of September. The harvest was, too, very forward ; so that the crop was not, in point of eatable matter, the half of an average crop. At one time, that is to say, in the year 1801 from January to September, the quarter loaf in London was eighteen-pence-halfpenny. During the whole of the year 1800 it was seventeen-pence. In the last three months of 1801 it came down to eleven-pence-halfpenny. In 1802 it came down to ten-pence-halfpenny. The crops of

1802 and 1803 were most abundant, and the harvests singularly fair. These delightful circumstances were the subject of a little poem by Mr. CANNING, wherein he endeavoured to immortalize the fame of the "*Great Doctor*," to whom he ascribed the sunshine, the showers, and the happy harvest-home. These crops brought down the loaf to nine-pence-halfpenny in 1803; and in the early part of 1804 they brought it down to eight-pence-halfpenny.

111. I beg you to keep these dates and prices in mind. No doubt so very great a disparity in the harvests was one of the causes, and, in this case, a principal cause of the disparity in prices; but the Old lady in Threadneedle Street was also at work. She had been issuing her paper up to the end of the year 1801, and until the month of March 1802, under the Act which protected her against the demands of her creditors. But, that act was to cease in one month *after the conclusion*

of peace with France. And this peace was concluded on the 25th of March 1802. There was, at that time, some little remnant of shame existing. The *Bank protecting Bill* had existed only six years; and, therefore, as peace had been talked of from the foregoing month of October, the Bank naturally looked forward for a resumption of payments in cash, agreeably to the act of Parliament. The protecting act, however, was not repealed; or, rather, it did not go out of effect; but another act was passed to continue it in force for a year longer; that is to say, until March 1803. Before that time came, another act was passed to continue it in force till six weeks after the commencement of the then next session of parliament. All the pretty workings upon these occasions; all the pretty reasons given for these acts will be seen by a reference to *PAPER AGAINST GOLD, Letter XIX.* which work, it is now more than ever necessary for the politician to have constantly in his hand.

112. In the early part of 1804, these combined causes of good crops, fine harvests, and the *drawing in of paper money preparatory to cash payments*, had brought down the quartern loaf to eight-pence three farthings, as we have seen before. The Landlords, who, in consequence of the high prices, had, where they could, raised their rents enormously, began to cry out for a *Corn Bill*, which is their old established trick. The vapouring empty skulled Minister PITT, who had turned out ADDINGTON and shoved himself into his place, said that corn was now *too low*. A Bill was brought into the House of Commons and passed that House in the early part of 1804; but the war had now begun again; a Bill had been passed to *put off cash payments till six months after the end of that war*; the paper had come tumbling out again; and, before the beginning of the harvest of that year the quartern loaf had risen to a shilling, and before the month of December it had risen

to sixteen-pence, up to which mark it kept upon an average until the passing of Peel's Bill.

113. Now, here was sudden relief, indeed! The "alarm" was "allayed" here presently. The "desponding predictions" were soon "dispelled;" but how were they "dispelled?" By the tumbling out of the paper money; by a new series of rise in prices, and by a new train of robberies committed upon the labouring classes. This was the way in which the "desponding predictions" were "dispelled;" and, if the Committee had recommended a *repeal of Peel's Bill*, and a consequent pushing out of the paper money again, then, indeed, the case of 1804 would have been a case in point, and the Landlords might have derived something like comfort from the experience of that period. But, to refer us to the experience of 1804, and, at the same time, to tell us that the means then made use of to remove the distress are never to be made use of again: to

tell the Landlords that they made similar complaints in 1804; to tell them that the subject of those complaints was of short duration; to leave them to recollect that the distress was then removed by an act which put cash payments off to a long and indefinite period; and to tell them (as the Committee do in another part of their Report) that *cash payments shall now take place*; this is, surely, a most singular way of going to work, to "allay" the "alarm" and "dispel the desponding predictions!"

114. As to the other period, the experience relative to which, is to cheer the hearts of the Landlords, I mean the period of 1814; how, in all the world could the Committee take it into their heads, that the *distress* of that period was either more or less than a *beginning of the present distress*? And how could they imagine that there was any other cause at work, than that very cause, which, though in a different degree, is at work at this hour?

115. Is it not notorious, that it was, not the *peace*, as fools imagined it to be, that made what was called the plenty of 1814; but, that preparation for cash payments which was the consequence of peace? As the law stood, previous to the peace, the Bank was to pay in cash, at *six months after the definitive treaty*. Before the hour came a Bill was passed that put off the cash payments for another year. Before that year expired, another Bill was passed to put off the cash payments for two years longer; and thus the thing went on; but, at every renewal there were *solemn protestations*; and, the Bank was always compelled to be cautious in issuing the paper.

116. In 1814 the pinch *began*; and it only began. The Landlords, as usual, began to cry out for a *corn Bill*, the moment that prices began to fall. They would not look at the Bank. They would not look at the real cause. They did not want prices to be low. They had felt the sweets of high

prices. They saw the labourers perishing. They knew well enough the cause. But then they, as now, sought for no remedy, other than that of some law that would compel the people to purchase food at high price. Not a word did they say about National Debt; about taxes; about depreciation of money; about the robbery of the labourer. They had found their rents rise three, four, five and six fold; and, therefore, all they wanted was high price; they, though in opposition to the Ministry, as to other matters, cordially supported them here, and even pushed them on to action; and Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, "Westminster's Pride," himself, in the teeth of the petition of his own constituents, setting both their instructions and their prayers at naught, *declined to oppose this Bill*, and has since made a merit of his conduct in this respect, in pleading for an acquittal on a charge of libel, to a jury of Landlords and Farmers at Leicester; nay, he, on that occasion insinu-

ated a charge of deluding the people, against those who had laboured in opposition to that Bill.

117. The Landlords had tasted the sweets of high prices; and they wanted something to keep those prices high. The corn Bill, however, had no such effect. The prices declined; for the Bank, always in a state of uncertainty, was compelled to draw in her paper. In 1817 the Landlords got a short relief; and *how?* Why, by the Government borrowing many millions from the Bank, and thus increasing the circulation. What was the consequence of this? Why, the few millions of gold that the Bank had put out, *instantly took their departure from the country!* Are not these facts notorious? Is it not notorious, that, the moment the gold began to disappear, that moment the Farmers and Landlords began to *flourish?* And is it not also notorious, that this flourishing continued *until the Government began to entertain the design of passing Peel's Bill?*

118. As soon as that design was formed, the Bank began to contrast its issues at a great rate, of which the Landlords very soon tasted the sorrowful effects. Those effects increased upon them continually; and, therefore, they have now again applied for their old remedy, a *corn Bill*, not having, in any one of the petitions, I believe, said a word about either the taxes or the debt. But, if the petitions were silent upon this subject, their tongues have not been silent; and, therefore, it is, that the Committee have taken such infinite pains to quiet their alarms: "to allay the alarm and "to dispel some of the desponding predictions."

119. What, then, has the Committee done? It has referred to two specific instances of "*past experience*:" it has shown that complaints like those of the present day were made in 1804 and in 1814. It has shown, that the low prices of those days were followed soon after by high prices; but it has omitted to state that, in

neither of those cases was a return to cash payments *certain*; and it has also omitted to state, that, in both those cases, the return to high prices was accompanied with a great increase of the circulating medium.

120. With this before our eyes; with this clear view of the matter; these evident causes, and these necessary effects, staring us in the face, what ineffable nonsense do not the following observations of the Committee appear! "The reflections which such a retrospect is calculated to excite may lead the occupiers of the soil, as it has led your Committee, to infer, that in Agriculture, as in all other pursuits, in which capital and industry can be embarked, there have been, and will be, *periods of reaction*; that such reaction is the more to be expected, in proportion to the long continued prosperity of the pursuit, and to the degree of *previous excitement and exertion* which that prosperity had called forth. They must add, as a

“further inference from the experience of former periods, to which the present crisis bears no distant resemblance, that there is a natural tendency in the distribution of capital and labour to remedy the disorders which may casually arise in society from such temporary derangements, and (without at all meaning to deny that it is the duty of the Legislature to do every thing in its power to shorten the duration, and to palliate the evils of the crisis) that it often happens that these disorders are prolonged, if not aggravated, by too much interference and regulation.”

121. We have just seen what the “retrospect” is. These gentlemen talk about “periods of reaction.” What do they mean by this new-fangled word, as applied to political matters? A curious thing, indeed, that *reaction*, that is to say, distress is naturally to be expected to follow prosperity; and that it is “the more to be expected in proportion to

“the long continued prosperity of the pursuit;” which is, bad grammar in the first place, and in the next, most ridiculous philosophy. A pretty thing, indeed, to tell us that a man cannot be prosperous in any pursuit, without being exposed to subsequent distress! If this were true, prosperity would require a remedy in like manner as the Committee says, a *redundant harvest* does. This is, however, nonsense too gross to pass even with Landlords, to whom, besides, it is but cold comfort to know that their present distress is the cause of foregone enjoyment.

122. As to the latter part of the observations in this paragraph, namely; that the disorders of this sort tend to *remedy themselves*, and are often prolonged by *too much interference and regulation*: If the Committee mean, that prices, whether very high or very low, arising from *natural causes*, tend to remedy the little disorders that may arise out of them, I perfectly agree with the Com-

mittee. I perfectly agree that disorders of this sort are often prolonged, if not aggravated, by too much interference and regulation. And well I may agree with the Committee in this; for, at all the Bills passed by the Collective Wisdom, for the last twenty years; corn Bills, import Bills, export Bills, bounty Bills, brown bread Bills, bolting-cloth Bills, potatoe Bills, herring soup Bills, and pilchard stew Bills, I have uniformly laughed. But with the leave of their Worships, the present case, is not a case of *natural causes*. It is a case where the cause is that of interference itself; for, if Peel's Bill had been in these words: Whereas it is expedient that Farmer GRUB, who rents a farm of Lord de DUNCEVILLE should pay a thousand bushels of wheat annually, instead of the five hundred bushels that he contracted for, may it please your Majesty that it be enacted, that the said GRUB pay to the said de DUNCEVILLE, for this year, and for every year henceforward

unto the end of his lease, the price of a thousand bushels of wheat: if the Bill had been in these very words, it could not have been a more direct act of interference between GRUB and his Landlord.

123. The Bill ruins GRUB; and nothing can save him but a Bill, which shall, under one form or another, repeal this Bill. The Government has begun with its *interference*. There has been direct interference all through, from the date of the Bank Stoppage Act to the date of Peel's Bill; and, therefore, for the Government to deprecate interference now is being delicate and squeamish just at the wrong time. It should not have interfered at all. It should not have interfered in the first place between the Bank and its Creditors, which was, perhaps, an instance of the most sturdy interference that ever was heard of in the world. It interfered with the property of the whole country. It disturbed all contracts. It caused the meaning of every contract, every settlement, every bar-

gain, every will, to be perverted. It said to the dead father, you left your son a thousand pounds, and he shall have only seven hundred; and now it says to the dead father, you left your son an estate, subject to legacies of half the amount of it, your son shall pay the legacies and he shall have no estate. This is what the laws that you have passed say in effect; and yet when something is called for to counteract this effect, you muster up a doctrine applicable only to a case of natural causes, and deprecate all interference and regulation!

124. So much for the assertion, that distress of this sort is *nothing new in our history*, and now let us proceed to the ninth proposition; namely,

IX. *That taxation DOES SOMETHING, but NOT MUCH, in creating this distress.* 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

125. The Committee acknowledge, what no part of the Collective Wisdom has ever before

acknowledged; namely, that taxes *tend to diminish the enjoyments of the people*. But here is a curious observation brought in; namely, that, during the *American war*, *prices were lower than during peace*; and that at the same time taxation was very heavy, and was accompanied with an annual *diminution of revenue*. The Committee further observe, that during the last war, the *National capital must have been greatly increased*.

126. One can hardly make out the real purpose for which these observations are introduced, unless it be that of communicating comfort to the Landlords, from the reflection that they survived the effects of the American War; and that of the assumed fact, that, if we have a great deal more to pay now, than we had after the American War, we have a monstrous deal *more to pay with*; so that, after all, our taxes are not heavier now than they were after the American War; and that, therefore, the Landlords ought not to be so much alarmed.

127. The Committee confound things in a very strange manner ; or, they would perceive, even from their own showing, the wide difference in the two cases. They would perceive, that during the American War, farm produce was lower priced than it was after the War ; whereas, in the present case, it is upon an average, taking cattle, corn, timber, underwood and all together, at a price *far below one half* the average price of the war. The Committee would perceive, if they were but to open their eyes, that the *stagnation of improvements*, as they call it, which took place during the American War, was the natural effect of withdrawing, by the means of taxes, the profits from Agriculture and trade ; and they would further perceive, that, in proportion as such withdrawing was diminished, improvements would recommence ; as they notoriously did.

128. If the Committee's eyes had once been open, for only a few minutes, they never would have talked of the *increase of capital*, during the last war ; if by capital they mean *things of value*. If, indeed, they mean an increase of Bank notes, they are as right as Monsieur de SNIP was, the other day, who said that we had added, during the war, *six hundred millions to our capital* ; thereby, meaning our debt. In any other way than this, an addition during the war was impossible. Granted that fine houses, fine bridges, fine streets, fine rows of houses, have been raised ; but have these been created by Bank notes ? Oh ! no ! they have been created by these unjust deductions from labour, of which deductions the Bank notes have been the cause. This infernal system of paper money has demolished two or three hundred thousand Farm-houses, and annihilated their furniture and the wearing apparel of their inhabitants. It has made so many holes and dens of misery of four millions of labourers' dwellings. Regent Street, though a tenth part finished, and though mani-

festly destined to be, like Waterloo Bridge, a monument of the fooleries of this at once wicked and despicable system ; this street alone has pillaged many a hamlet and village. Call you this making an addition to our capital ? Capital means money. It means *gold*, or things that can be exchanged for gold, and readily exchanged for gold, too ; and, how then, can there, taking the nation as a whole, have been an increase of these proceeding from Bank notes ?

129. This word capital is made use of, it appears to me, when men *do not know what they mean*. In the foregoing observations relative to the American War, the Committee say that a part of the taxes of those times " must have " been paid out of the *capital* and " not out of the *income* of the Nation." Now what in God's name does this mean ? Let us try it by the test of plain words. Taxes are the things to be paid. Very well. These must be paid in *money*. Very well so far. This

money then, the Committee say, did not come out of the *income of the people*. Watch me here, reader—did not come out of the people's income ; that is to say, out of their rents ; out of the profits of their trade and business ; out of the produce of their trade and business ; out of their wages, daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly ; out of any earnings whatsoever ; out of the fruit of any sort of labour or skill ; out of none of these did the money come to pay the taxes with ! Oh ! Good, good ! But what did it come out of, then ? It was *money*, mind you ; and the money must have come from *some-where*. " Why," say the Committee, " have we not told you " that it came out of the capital " of the people ? " And what is the capital, then ; why, it must be *hoards* that the people had ! Nothing short of this : nothing else will answer your purpose ; for, if you mean that the people *had to sell part of their property*, let me ask you where they were to find a *customer* ? Let me ask you

where a *whole people* were to find a customer. Some might sell their property to pay their taxes; but then there must be others to buy it with their *incomes*; so that, at last, the taxes came as all taxes must, out of rents and out of labour; unless we go upon the monstrous supposition that every man according to his means has a hoard; and, that, at the mere invitation of the Government, without any possible compulsion, he will liberally put his hands into that hoard.

130. If, then, this notion of the Committee be nothing short of most astounding nonsense; if it be utterly impossible that taxes can be paid out of any thing but the rents and the labour of a country; how false is the notion, that, by the terrible humbug of paper-money, the people's means of paying taxes have been increased! There has, in fact, been no such increase of means. There has been an increase of splendour and an increase of luxury on the one hand, and an increase of beg-

gary and misery on the other. The thousands have been glittering in gold; and the millions have been shivering in rags.

131. So much for this word *capital*, which, as I said before, is a word made use of by those that have no definite idea of their own meaning. The operation of the paper system was to draw away the wages of the labouring classes, and to place them in great masses in the hands of Bankers, Attornies, Jews, Jobbers, Contractors, Commissaries, Nabobs, Pensioners, Commissioners, and all that host of creatures which was created by paper money, war and corruption. The Landlord profited, the Parson profited, the big Farmer profited; for they also kept drawing from the wages of labour a sufficiency to compensate them for the depreciation in the value of money, and they continually drew something more than what was sufficient for this purpose. Struck with horror at the idea of never seeing specie again; petrified

with affright at the vision of everlasting compulsory peace; their hair standing on end, their mouths gaping open, and their eyes ready to start out of their head upon being awakened from their dream of security, and told that they might at any moment be deprived of the means of keeping a bayonet in pay: thus scared out of their wits, the Boroughmen cried, Give us gold!

132. It was decreed that they should have gold; but they did not ask for low prices; they did not ask for a cessation of the profits which they derived from a deduction from labour; they did not ask to have a million of money less brought them home from the sheep fairs, alone, than they were accustomed to have brought them home. They were amused with those "*oracular belchings*" which told them they would lose only four and a half per cent. This they could endure: this, liberal and public spirited souls, they would gladly sacrifice for the honour of Old England, little dream-

ing, that half rents and double mortgages would be the inevitable effects of the measure. And now, for their consolation upon this hideous discovery, the Committee reminds them that they survived the American war, and that, the "*capital*" of the nation is now prodigiously increased. They do not positively say with Monsieur DE SNIP, that it is increased in the amount of six hundred millions of pounds sterling; but that it is increased in an extraordinary degree.

133. Having mentioned Monsieur de SNIP, it occurs to me to mention, that I hear, that he has prepared his *pedigree* against the time that he is to become a *Lord*. I hear, that he means to say, that his family "*came in* with the *Conqueror*;" and that his ancestors cut a grand figure "*at the battle of Hastings*." He means, I understand, to hoist the *escalop*, the *griffin*, and the *bare and bloody arm*, and to sink for ever the *needle*, the *cabbage*, the *goose* and the *louse*; and, as to *contract*,

he intends to have the word expunged from the dictionary, and to have "*capital*" inserted in its stead, with a quoted illustration after the manner of old Dame-Devil, thus: "*CAPITAL*.—Money taken away from the labouring classes, and, being given to army-tailors, and such like, enables them to keep fox-hounds, and to trace their descent from the Normans."

Leaving Monsieur DE SNIP to go on with his pedigree, let me, for a moment, before I conclude this Letter, return to the Committee, for the purpose of again making them my sincere and humble acknowledgments for having confessed that *taxes* are an *evil*; that they do deduct from the *comforts of a people*; that they do retard *improvement*; that they are *burdensome*; and that their *weight* is a thing to be *lamented*. I am sincerely grateful to them for confessing that this is the nature of taxes; because it contradicts the assertion of the *hole-digger*, made in 1819, that, if *all*

the taxes were taken off, the labouring classes would not be in the smallest degree the better for it; and that I was a *deluding and seditious* rascal for telling them, that they suffered from the taxes. This confession of the Committee, must, however, give pain to that famous political economist, Mr. JUDGE BAILEY, who, in his "*charge*" to the Grand Jury of York, in 1819, assured them, that national debts and taxes were a *blessing*; and no one thought to ask him, whether it was a *blessing* to take from a labouring man twenty shillings a year in tax on his salt, when, without this, he would have twenty shillings more to lay out in bread. Taxes are, indeed, a *blessing* to the *Judges*, as things now stand; for, since 1797, *their salaries have been doubled*, and wages and provisions are as *low-priced* as they were in 1797; aye, and as to provisions, clothing, and materials for building, *lower priced*. Taxes, to persons thus situated, are great blessings; but, far other-

wise with those who have to *pay* them.

135. In concluding the present Letter, leaving the aforementioned comfortings of the Committee, together with my commentary, to produce their natural effect on all but addled brains, let me just observe, that, if the Landlords be not really born-ideots, they will prate no more about *Corn Bills*, but will set on upon the *taxes*, and take them away. The *malt*, *salt*, and *leather* taxes, ought to be taken off directly. This would produce *retrenchment* in a twinkling without any addresses to the king, which is a poor way of going to work. However, I beg leave to be understood as *expecting* no such thing as this. My opinion is, that we shall have a good deal of *talk*, and some *stir*; but, that, the Landlords and Parsons are so much afraid of the *Radicals*, that, rather than make an opening for them, they will go on paying double and treble interest for the debt. Let them: they will only secure their own ruin; and will

not keep off the Radicals after all, who will have a great deal less trouble in grappling with the *Jews*.

136. In my next Letter, I come to the assertion, that the *interest of debt ought not to be reduced*. This is a *grand point*. It is, indeed, *the question*; and I shall endeavour to settle it in the minds of my readers.

W. COBBETT.

FESTIVAL
OF
GEESE AND FOXES:

*Or, an Account of the presenting of
the "SUPERB EPERGNE"
to LAWYER WILLIAMS, at
PRESTON in Lancashire.*

IF I could believe, that *the people* of Preston had any thing to do with this matter, I should heartily wish them to feel the lash, back lash and belly pinch, to the end of their days. From the account,

published in London, it would seem, that this Lawyer Williams, who stood a candidate for this borough at the last election, was, the other day, invited to a *dinner* at Preston; and, that, at this dinner, at which a fellow of the name of LAWE, who is called, or, rather who calls himself, an *Esquire*, presided: a thing called a "*Superb Epergne*" was, with suitable mummerly, presented to this Lawyer, in his double capacity of *Patriot* and of *Defender of the Queen*!

There can be little doubt, that the whole thing was *got up* by some sharp fellows, some *foxes*, of Preston, with a view of raising their price with the other "*interest*" at the next election; for, if there be nobody to *oppose*, the price must come down, and produce, as in the affairs of Agriculture, what may well be called, "*electioneering distress*." The many (if many there were) who subscribed to the "*Superb Epergne*," acted *goose* upon this occasion; and, it seems, indeed,

to have been a pretty large assemblage of these cackling animals; for, there appears to have been a whole tribe of black bodied and gray-headed foxes from the Assizes at Lancaster; and these never run across the country for nothing.

But, what is a "*Superb Epergne*?" Is it a dish, or a mug, or a platter, or a bowl; or what is it? And how come these Weavers by such fine words and corresponding taste? Who told them any thing about *epergnes*? They hardly use such things in their own houses. However, the main thing is, the want of sense, or the want of honesty, so visible and so flagrant here. What had this Lawyer done to merit the praises of the people of Preston, or of any other part of the kingdom? He did, indeed, do *better* than the rest of the Lawyers of the unfortunate Queen; but, he could not do that, it seems, without a most *brutal* kick at the people, which kick I noticed at the time.

However, that this was merely

a *Goose and Fox Festival* is quite clear from the drift of the proceedings of the day ; proceedings much too disgusting, too nauseous and sickening to be noticed in detail. It is sufficient for us to know, that the GEESE cackled out a toast to a *Lawyer Cottingham* (never heard of before,) who, it seems, accompanied " their CHAMPION," Williams, as a sort of bottle-holder from the bar at Lancaster. The bottle-holder of " the *Champion* " gave the Geese a *speech* ; and then Geese sang songs of *their own composing* for the occasion ! I should like to hear Geese sing !

After the singing, came toasting, and *Lawyer Brougham*, the defender of the employment of spies, who went with Lord Hutchinson to St. Omers, and who made to the Ministers the proposition of 1819, exactly squaring with that of St. Omers ; this "*Champion*" was toasted with *three times three*. Next came his brother, who had kept together with him "*in chivalry*," *Lawyer Denman*. Next

came Dr. LUSHINGTON, whose grief drove him to marry, in ten hours after the breath was out of the Queen's body, to a daughter of CARR, the famous Solicitor to the not less famous Excise. After this came the other Lawyers who had been employed in the case of the unhappy Queen ; and, then, to wind the thing properly up, came *Lawyer Scarlett* and the independent gentlemen of the *Northern Bar* ! SCARLETT, who had prosecuted Messrs. HUNT, JOHNSON and BAMFORD ; Scarlett, who is, in short, the most decided and most bitter enemy of *Reform*.

I hope and trust, that *the people* of Preston had nothing to do with this matter, and that they will find some means of openly and formally disavowing all part in it ; for, unless they do this, I shall set them down as being too feeble, too much beaten down, to be capable of any thing like manly conduct ; or too corrupt to be worthy of a moment of the time of any man who wishes and who

has the capacity to serve them. The toasting of *Scarlett* is quite enough to warrant this conclusion.

As to this Lawyer Williams, as a friend of *Freedom and Reform*, the very idea is brutish. As well may the fellows of Nottingham endeavour to make us believe, that they elected *Birch* and *Lawyer Denman* from motives of a public nature. They complain of the lash; but the lash is what they deserve. These two towns were the first to address the Queen; and, it must be *known* to the people of these towns, that the *answers*, in which the unfortunate Queen was represented as *disavowing all connexion with them*, were the work of her *Lawyers*; and yet, these are the men, whom the silly, or corrupt, creatures now praise! However, it is the trusting of *Lawyer Scarlett*, the prosecutor general of the Reformers in the North; the prosecutor of those who *escaped* the sword on the 16th of August: this is the offence at PRESTON; and, if the people of Preston do not

disavow this act, they merit lashing and starvation for the rest of their lives.

Would they make us believe, that there is *public spirit* in sticking up this Williams against the man of Lord Derby? They will deceive nobody by such a pretence. Lord Derby's man loves *freedom* full as well as Lawyer Williams does; and, I should greatly prefer him. Lord Derby *wants nothing from us*. He has an estate of his own. He wants no *commissionships*, or other sop, such as they fling into the mouth of a barking lawyer.

And, be it observed, that Lawyers will now bite sharper than ever. There is legal "*distress*" as well as agricultural "*distress*." Briefs fall off as bank-notes disappear. This is another of the good effects of *gold*. Let it continue to come on; let it get about the country; and, some thousands of them must be upon the parish themselves, instead of being engaged in proposing projects for *checking the population* of the

Labouring Classes. The population of these gentry will be *thinned*, I warrant it. The *com-missionerships* and *solicitorships* once taken away; left to their *merits*, and the clients without paper-money; let this take complete and full effect, and I give the parish-officers of St. Clement Danes, St. Paul Covent Garden, St. Dunstan in the West, and St. Andrew Holborn, notice to enlarge the dimensions of their *work-houses*, and to prepare some snug little places, such as those to which these worthies have so mainly assisted in consigning the Reformers. Once safely lodged in these receptacles, we may, with little alteration, use, in speaking of them, the words which SWIFT used in speaking of another set, to whom they seem to bear no distant resemblance.

Let them, when they once get in,
 Sell their counsel for a pin.
 Let them, while in ragged breeches,
 Tear their throats with frothy speeches.
 Let them, while they're bit by fleas,
 Dream of grasping bags of fees.
 Let them, while they're whipp'd & bang'd,
 Thank their God they've not been hang'd.

In my COTTAGE-ECONOMY, No. 3, published on the first of this month, I have made particular mention of a *mill* for grinding wheat and other grain by the hand of man. Here is the *Doctor* for these gentry! Put to these mills, at the rate of six bushels a day, they would soon understand what is meant by getting a living by the *sweat of the brow*! Never mind their *gout*: they can sit and grind; and, if they have gout in the hands, tie them to the wheel-handle with strings or with straps. Here a couple of "*champions*," might indeed (and must) "*keep together* in their chivalry;" and that, too, without insulting the common sense of the people, without destruction to that which it would be their duty to take care of, and without a bawling and a brawling, worthy only of Babel or of Bedlam. The constant clicketing of the mill, would, like the singing of the nurse, wear out the perseverance of their lungs; and, if it were impossible to reduce them to abso-

lute silence, they would, I engage, at the end of two months, be brought to a state that would make it possible for you to hear yourself speak within a hundred yards of their mouths.

Whenever this happy state of things shall arrive, *then will be the time* for the Geese of Preston, in Lancashire! Then they may have *choice and cheap!* "Champions" as plenty as hips and haws before the birds grow hungry! And, this time is far less distant than some may imagine. For my part, I should be the most miserable dog that ever existed, if I did not look forward with lively hope to the time when the "*poor lawyers*" will go about the streets as the "*poor gardeners*" now do in snowy weather, only with a *big old wig* upon a pole instead of a *cabbage*. Never will I give one of them a farthing, unless he first make me a *speech*, including these words: "Gentlemen of the Jury, *God forbid* I should do any thing tending to undervalue the "*Liberty of the Press*, which is,

"indeed, absolutely necessary to
"the preservation of a constitu-
"tion, which is the envy of sur-
"rounding nations and the admi-
"ration of the world; *but*, gentle-
"men of the jury, in order to pre-
"serve this precious *Liberty* of
"the Press it is that I call upon
"you to curb its licentiousness."
Then I shall burst out a laughing,
and chuck the blackguard a half-
penny. This will be the time for
the Preston patriots, to whom, in
the mean while, I bid farewell.

LADIES' BONNETS.

THIS matter makes a great *stir*; and well it may, the question being, whether we be able to raise from our own soil and to make *a very considerable article of wearing apparel, which we now import from a foreign country*. The question is nothing less than this; and, I have the very great pleasure to tell my readers, that my *conjecture* of last week, in the affirmative of this question, has already become nearly *a certainty*.

I then observed, that I had examined a three-guinea Leghorn

Bonnet, and, that I was convinced, that I could grow *rye* and *wheat straw* in *England* to make a bonnet *much finer than that*. I went farther, and pointed out the way of doing this. I was not *sure* what sort of straw the *Leghorn Bonnet* was made of; but, I was nearly sure, that it was made of *rye-straw*. Several persons have called at the Office of the Register, and have spoken to my son on the subject; and, amongst others, there have been persons to ridicule the idea of making Bonnets, *equal to the Leghorn ones*, from *rye* straw! This was scouted as a sort of *whim* of mine.

Well, then, I am now (*Tuesday evening*) able to assert in the most positive terms, that the *Leghorn Bonnets* are made of the straw of our common corn, *rye*, *wheat*, and even *oats*! Be it known to the public, that *straw* is, in one case at least, *imported from Leghorn*, and *made into plat* here. A gentleman who is an importer and manufacturer in this way, has (this minute) been with me, and has given me samples of the straw for such purpose imported. Before I examined the straw (to say the truth, it was before I *put on my spectacles*!) I asked, *what it was the straw* of; and the gentleman said, he believed it was that

of a corn that grew in *Italy*, and that would not grow here. Having now put on my spectacles, I applied my *farmering* skill to the matter; and, in short, to the great surprise of the gentleman, I not only instantly asserted, that these were specimens of straw of *rye* and *oats*; but, I also showed him even *grains* of those plants, which I picked out of the *bits of starved ears and haws at the tops of the straws*, which ears are left on in the bleaching, and until the straw is used for platting.

Thus, then, *this point is settled*; and I *pledge myself that straw can be raised in England as fine as any that ever was or ever can be raised in Italy*; and I am not to be made to believe that we cannot cut the plants and bleach the straw as well as the *Italians* can. For, if it require a hotter *sun* than we have, we have *glass*.

But (and the *farmer* who reads this will stare at it) amongst these *rye* and *oat* straws I found some straws of *grass*. It would seem that the *Italians* are not very nice in the cultivation of the *rye* and *oats*; and that, in the imported straw, there are frequently straws of *grass*, cut with the *rye* or *oats*, bleached with the straw of those plants, and sent to us in this mixed state. And, I actually have, in a

little bunch, containing *eleven straws*, 4 of oats; 1 of rye; 1 of meadow-fox-tail; 1 of cock's-foot (I think it is); 1 of sweet vernal grass (I think it is); 1 of another sort of grass that I do not know that I ever heard the name of, but that I have seen from my infancy to this day; and two of. what think you, farmer? Of the common up-land grass, which is sown with the clover, which, in Surrey, when I was a boy, was called *Bents*, though, I suppose, the "Agriculturists" have now some fine name for it; which in Hampshire the old smock-frock farmers call *Bennets*; and which, in Norfolk, is called *White Nonsuch*!

Good God! That we should have been sending to Italy for *Bennets* to make bonnets of! For, observe, the straws of the *Bennets* are pretty nearly as beautiful as any of the rest of the straws. If every one of the sorts be not of *equal* beauty, there is no very great difference. The *Bennets*, which grow yearly in about a *fifth* part of all the arable land in England, will make, I verily believe, in the hands of English women, even *finer bonnets than that of Miss Woodhouse*!

But ("none of your cursed *politics*," I think I hear the fool-rogues say) have we really been

sending to Italy for rye, oat, fox-tail, cock's-foot, and bennet, straw, to make a great article of wearing apparel, to make *covering for the heads of a third part of the people*, while we were paying enormously for the use of the talents of a *Board of Trade*? This Board makes a great splutter in the world. It is a *twig of that tree, that tree, that tree*, which "Glory" once said ought to be *hewed down and cast into the fire*; but, which has stood and spread its influence about, though "Glory" had, long and long ago, the power to do that job of *hewing*, which he said ought to be done, and which will be done, at last, in *spite* of him. This "*Board of Trade*" have a *President*, a *Secretary*, a *Law-Clerk*, *Messengers*, *Porters*, "*Necessary Woman*," and God only knows what besides. If the "*Necessary-Woman*" *only* had been in the Office, she, upon finding, that a great branch of English manufacture, at Dunstable and other places, had been ruined by the importation of *Bonnets* from Leghorn; would have examined the Leghorn-Bonnets to see what *materials* they were composed of. She would have sent to Leghorn to ascertain the fact. Finding that the bonnets were made of rye and oat and bennet

straw, she would have ascertained the manner of *cultivating those plants* in order to get the straw so fine and so tough. And, having done all this for about fifty pounds, she would have saved Miss Woodhouse the trouble of sending a Bonnet from Connecticut, and would have saved the American Ladies the trouble of sending all the way to Italy for Bonnets that they would have got from London and Liverpool.

This is what the "*Necessary-Woman*" would have done, if the "*Board*" had consisted solely of her. But, the *President*, Mr. *Vice President*, the *Lords of Trade*, as they are pompously called, would, then, have had *no places*; and there would have been no need of a couple of briefless Lawyers as their Secretary and "*Law-Clerk*;" and, of course, all these would have experienced "*distress*."

Of the "*Society of Arts*" much, too, may be said, in this case, in the way of no very high commendation. They should have inquired what the Leghorn bonnets *are made of*; for, is it not to show great ignorance, or great remissness, not to have ascertained this point; a point ascertained by me in about 30 hours from the time of my first thinking about the

matter! I am no *conjurer*: I asked for *information*, and I got it; and, so would they if they had asked for it. Miss Woodhouse was entitled to their highest prize for calling their attention to so important a matter; but, if they had made a proper use of her hint; if they had been *diligent* in their inquiries, they would not have needed the delay of a year to *hunt about after grass*, and to *sow her seeds in flower-pots*, which one of them told my son he had done. Even if no inquiry had been made about the Leghorn materials, the seeds, sent by Miss Woodhouse, might have been compared with *our grass seeds*, during this very last summer, and many an acre (if that had been necessary) might have been sowed by this time.

But, what *useful* thing ever was done, *in this way*? Dr. JENNER got 20,000*l.*; I think it was. I most vehemently censured this at the time; and I always insisted, that his "*discovery*," which was *no discovery at all*, was worse than useless. And, at this very moment, there is, I am informed, a son of SIR RICHARD PHILLIPS, just narrowly escaped with life from the natural small pox, caught many years after he had been inoculated with the *Cow-pox*, and

that, too, BY DOCTOR JENNER HIMSELF!

Propose any thing really useful, really important, and that has plain sense in it; and you may be quite sure, that the **THING** will have nothing to do with you. Have you a *seat*, or a *vote* for a seat; then the **THING** will listen, not to your *project*, for the **THING** cares little about that; but, to the *terms* of seat, or the vote. Oh, my dear Miss Woodhouse! If you had but a *seat*; or had but a relation, or even a *bon-ami*, that had a sister or a wife of a *bon-ami* that had one! But, alas! you live in Connecticut, where a single bonnet is worth twenty score of seats.

I have had some Leghorn-Plat shown to me, and shown to me, I believe, for the *finest* too. Now, I assert, that the finest of the Leghorn-Plat that I have seen is not nearly so fine, *not half so fine*, as the American Plat which I have, and which, as the reader will remember, was got by my son "*amongst the neighbours*" of Miss Woodhouse; and yet, I am satisfied, that we can grow straw here *equal in fineness to that made use of in Connecticut*.

In my next, or in some future Number of the Register, I will give my opinion in detail as to the

means of *growing this straw*; and, I by no means despair of seeing, or hearing of there being, a considerable quantity grown next year.

N. B. I have just heard, that it was the *Silver-Medal* and 20 guineas that the Society of Arts finally awarded to Miss Woodhouse, on condition that she sent 5lb. of the seed, some of the plat, and a full description of the growing, cutting, bleaching and preparing the straw.

THE KING!!!

WHAT, then, reader, did you think, that I had *wholly lost sight* of his Majesty? He makes, indeed, very little *noise* when he is *here*; he moves about in *England* as quietly as the mouse and the bat; he passes over the pavement of *London* as softly as if his wheels were padded to spare the nerves of his loving and, possibly, lying-in, subjects. But, Fame, with her bawling, bothering, blabbering, brazen throat, lets the world know of his grand and glorious deeds

in Ireland, that land of "*warmth*" and of *whiskey*. Have we not read of the sweet *Shamrock*, held out in his Royal left hand to the view of the loving crowd, while, the neck leaning and looks melting at the same time, his Royal *right fore-finger* pointed to the sovereign's "*truly Irish heart?*" Have we not read of the *splendid palace*, rising up with the growth of a pumpkin, at once to immortalize the virtues, and to render frequent the visits, of the Royal guest? Have we not read how "*Ireland's own Duke*," who and whose Duchess had dined with the Queen, was now (the Queen being a *corpse*) the first amongst those who hastened to dine with the King? Have we not read, how the great Catholic-Patriot, *Lawyer O'Connell*, whose friends, at least, solicited for him an office *under the wife*, carried a *Crown of Laurel* to put upon the head of *the husband*? Have we not read of the grand triumphal landing from the *steam-boat*; and of how the "*warm*" people shed

tears for joy, while their rags were set a dancing from the same "*fine and enthusiastic feeling*" in the bosom of the wind? Have we not read of the silent velocity, with which "*the sovereign*" flew from Anglesea to Ramsgate, those dwellings of kindred souls? And, finally, have we not read of how "*the sovereign*," snatching the trident from Neptune, lanced forth on the deep, undauntedly exclaiming, I dare say, "*for Calais, a-hoy!*" and (having a *steam-boat* along-side) how he set even the winds at defiance?

Have we not read of these things? And are our children, our dear little children, now "*warm*" in the cradle, never, never to read of them in verse of rhyme or blank? Shall these things, these deeds, pass without verse from Southey or Walter Scott? Shall Fitzgerald, who, like the flower that the children call the "*smell-smock*," blows every June, not produce an autumnal blow for *this one year*? Shall we have nothing to record

the deeds of the last two immortal months! Nothing, *nothing at all*, to describe to posterity the "*warmth*" of the Irish!

How they halloo'd, how they bawl'd;
How they scream'd and caterwaul'd;
How they scamper'd, how they squeeze'd;
How they puff'd and how they weaz'd;
How they dress'd and how they shin'd;
How they guzzl'd, how they din'd;
How they sweated, how they felt;
And, at that time, how they smelt;
How they sobb'd and how they sigh'd;
How they blubber'd, how they cry'd;
How, ye Gods! they swore and ly'd!

Shall we have *nothing* to record this? Then I shall say, that, though *Lawyers* "keep together in *their chivalry*," the age of poetical chivalry is gone!

More about the *king* next week. No man shall say of me, that I *neglect* my Sovereign. I say with *faithful* old *Lawyer* Thurlow, "When I *forget* my King, may my God forget me!"

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THE gentleman who finds an error in page 708 of last Register,

will find, that the word *who*, which stands in the 2d line, should come after the word *eye*, in the 3d line. The word has been misplaced in the printing.—In page 760, there is "*horse and all*," instead of "*house and all*;" which is a terrible mistake; for, even the most devout Catholics do not believe, that the Virgin flew over the sea on *horse-back*. However, let the reader only bear in mind, that I never *see* the thing after it is written till it come in the shape of a pamphlet, and, which I assure him is the case, that I never *read* the manuscript; and then he will cease to wonder (if he do wonder at all) at the occasional blunders he sees. It is a different matter, when we come to King's Speeches, State-Papers, Reports, and the like. Here there is always an *abundance of time*; and, therefore, if the writing be not, in *all* respects, correct, we must conclude, that the writer is *incapable*, or that he has been *shamefully negligent*. In this case there is, moreover, *duty* to the king and the country: duty to do the thing properly, or to decline to undertake it.

My CORRESPONDENT, who sends me the *half-crown bank-note* from PENRITH, and the account of the *premium of 5d.* given

for *Sovereigns* at Glasgow, will accept of my thanks, though this latter does seem to thwart the *maxim of law*, laid down lately in Somersetshire, that "bank-notes are *more valuable* than the *present gold coin*." These things I shall notice in my next.

The Correspondent, who sends me the *Norwich Mercury* of last week, containing *one hundred and four* advertisements of *farming stock for sale*, including the *moreen* curtains, *sofas*, *easy-chairs*, *mahogany-COMMODES*, *mahogany-BIDET*, *cut-glass decanters*, *silver desert-knives*, *urns of the same metal*, *PIANOS by Broadwood*, and other "implements of husbandry," has my very best thanks. Here is the "*capital*" that Monsieur DE SNIP says we have *amassed* during the war! Here is a part, at least, of that famous "*capital*," which the Committee of the "*Collective Wisdom*" say is to face our increased taxation! Here, in plain sense, is a part of what a hellish paper-money has drawn from the blood and bones of the Labouring Classes. But, more of this next week; especially as the *Norwich Mercury* informs us, that he (though he fills nearly all his paper) is compelled to leave out some of his adver-

tisements till next week. This, too, is only one paper out of *three*, which are published at Norwich; and the other two will, in all likelihood, contain *some* advertisements of this sort, not inserted in this *Mercury*. So that, as that wise man, CASTLEREAGH, so profoundly observed, we are getting into a "*general working of events*," of which this sweeping sale of *bidets* and *pianos* is by no means a trifling symptom.

Come, come, farmer Chopstick, don't fret yourself! You can do very well without these things. A soaking shower, or a sop in the brook, and the singing of the lark, will be better even for you, than *commodes*, *bidets* and *pianos*; and a great deal better will the new state of things be for your ploughmen and threshers.

I should like to get a sight of the next *Norwich Mercury*, and of the other two papers of the same week.—These *country papers* are now become very interesting. A gentleman tells me, that I very much over-estimated the probable number of sheep usually penned at *Weyhill-fair*. He must be right; because he lives near the spot. He tells me, however, that some Lambs were sold as low as at *five shillings* at *Wilton-fair*. I said, that they would have sold at that

price, if it had not been for the very large crops which the *turnips* promise to yield. This price is quite charming! It puts me in mind of Long-Island, where we used, in "*prosperous* times," to buy a ewe for a dollar. The price now ("*distress*" being come) is about *two shillings* of our money, I suppose. There was a fellow at Botley whose favourite adjective was "*miserable*;" and, accordingly, taking, like the Agri-

cultural Committee, a little liberty with grammar, he used to say of a hog, for instance, that he was *miserable fat*. The term, *distress*, appears to be at present a general favourite; and, as it must be *distress*, give me, I say, that sort of distress which makes a lamb worth only half a week's wages of a labourer; for, if there were no other reason, this makes it really less troublesome to earn sheep than to steal them.

OCTOBER 6, 1821.

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